

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3267
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 4 KABUL 4421

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

CINCPAC FOR 5453/J-4

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, PFOR, AF
SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF US SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN
AFGHANISTAN FOR FY 1979

REF: A) STATE 133136 B) CINCPAC 100452Z JUN 77

1. SET FORTH BELOW IS THE MISSION'S COORDINATED ASSESSMENT
OF OUR SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN AFGHANISTAN. IN
GENERAL, OUR COMMENTS FOLLOW THE SEQUENCE OUTLINED IN
PARAGRAPHS THREE AND FOUR OF REFTEL A.

2. UNITED STATES INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN. OVERALL
UNITED STATES INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN ARE LIMITED AND
STEM ESSENTIALLY FROM THAT COUNTRY'S GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION
AND POSSIBLE ROLE IN REGIONAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS.
THE UNITED STATES CURRENTLY HAS LITTLE, IF ANY, STRATEGIC
INTEREST
IN AFGHANISTAN, AND OUR ECONOMIC INTERESTS --
ALBEIT GRADUALLY GROWING -- ARE NOT LIKELY TO BECOME
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SIGNIFICANT IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THE POLITICAL
INTERESTS WHICH WE DO HAVE ARE BASICALLY TWO: 1) TO SUPPORT
THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF AFGHAN-
ISTAN, AS WELL AS TO ENCOURAGE ITS SELF-PROCLAIMED FOREIGN
POLICY OF NON-ALIGNMENT; AND, 2) TO SUPPORT CONTINUED
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY WITHIN THE COUNTRY SO
THAT AFGHANISTAN MIGHT PURSUE A RESPONSIBLE REGIONAL

POLICY, ESPECIALLY WITH RESPECT TO ITS RELATIONS WITH IRAN AND PAKISTAN. A COROLLARY OF THESE TWO INTERESTS IS ONE ENCOMPASSING A REDUCTION OF SOVIET INFLUENCE ON

VARIOUS SERDENTS OF AFGHAN SOCIETY,BUT THIS IS NOT OF SUFFICIENT PRIORITY THAT WE WOULD WANT AFGHANISTAN TO BECOME AN ARENA OF EXCESSIVE SOVIET-AMERICAN COMPETITION. NOR EVER WOULD WE DESIRE TO INCREASE OUR OPERATIONS HERE TO THE EXTENT THAT DIFFICULTIES VIS-A-VIS MOSCOW WOULD BE CREATED FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN (GOA).

3. IN OUR ASSESSMENT, THE MAINTENANCE OF A SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM THROUGH THE PROVISION OF GRANT MILITARY TRAINING (IMET) ADVANCES THE TWO BASIC U.S. INTERESTS OUTLINED ABOVE, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME IT OFFSETS -- BY, IN OUR VIEW, AN ACCEPTABLE INCREMENT -- SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THE AFGHAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. IN THIS REGARD, OUR TRAINING PROGRAM PROVIDES THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT WITH AN ALTERNATIVE, HOWEVER LIMITED, TO VIRTUALLY COMPLETE DEPENDENCE UPON THE SOVIET UNION FOR PROFESSIONAL MILITARY TRAINING. MOREOVER, BY PROVIDING TRAINING DESIGNED TO ASSIST IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE OVERALL READINESS OF AFGHANISTAN'S ARMED FORCES, WE THEREBY INCREASE TO SOME EXTENT THE ABILITY OF AFGHANISTAN TO MAINTAIN ITS OWN TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND INDEPEN-
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DENCE.FURTHERMORE, AN INCREASED MILITARY PROFESSIONALISM -- AND, AS IN MOST DEVELOPING NATIONS, THE MILITARY IN AFGHANISTAN REPRESENT THE ULTIMATE DECISION-MAKING POWER IN SERIOUS POLITICAL CRISIS SITUATIONS -- COULD PROVIDE A STABILIZING INFLUENCE WITHIN THE COUNTRY. AS A RESULT OF SUCH A HEIGHTENED STABILITY, AFGHANISTAN COULD THEN FIND ITSELF IN A POSITION TO PLAY A MORE RESPONSIBLE AND FORTHCOMING ROLE IN REGIONAL AFFAIRS, AND A CADRE OF U.S.-TRAINED MILITARY OFFICERS (WHO ARE GENERALLY WELL-DISPOSED TO THE UNITED STATES AND ITS INSTITUTIONS) COULD MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO SUCH A POLICY.

4. PERCEIVED THREAT TO AFGHANISTAN. AFGHANISTAN CONSIDERS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT EXTERNAL THREAT TO ITS SECURITY TO BE POSED BY PAKISTAN. WHETHER GOA DECISION-MAKERS VIEW THIS THREAT AS IMMINENT, OR EVEN PROBABLE -- WE WOULD TEND TO BELIEVE THAT THEY CONSIDER SUCH A THREAT REASONABLY REMOTE FOR THE NEAR TERM -- RECENT YEARS HAVE SEEN REAL TENSIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. DURING THE 1953-63 PREMIERSHIP OF PRESIDENT DAOUD, RELATIONS DETERIORATED TO THE POINT THAT THE BORDER WAS

ACTUALLY

CLOSED FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. AS PRESIDENT, HOWEVER, DAOUD WITHIN THE LAST YEAR HAS PURSUED A POLICY OF RAPPROCHEMENT -- RECIPROCATED BY PAKISTAN'S PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO -- WHICH HAS, FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST, PROBABLY CALMED ANY AFGHAN SENSE OF PAKISTANI THREAT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE RECENT POLITICAL DISTURBANCES WITHIN PAKISTAN HAVE CAUSED THE EVOLUTION OF THIS BILATERAL RAPPROCHEMENT TO MARK TIME.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 4 KABUL 4421

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

CINCPAC FOR 5453/J-4

5. IN TERMS OF PERCEIVED EXTERNAL THREAT, A DISTANT SECOND POSITION IN GOA EYES IS HELD BY IRAN, ALTHOUGH GOA POLICY-MAKERS PROBABLY SET LITTLE STORE IN ANY SCENARIOS INVOLVING THE SHAH'S LEGIONS SWARMING ACROSS THE DESERTS TOWARD KABUL. PROBABLY EVEN MORE REMOTE IS AN OVERT THREAT POSED BY AFGHANISTAN'S GIANT NEIGHBOR TO THE NORTH. THE DISPARITIES IN REAL MILITARY STRENGTH, COUPLED WITH AN INTERPRETATION OF SOVIET INTENTIONS, PROBABLY PLACES THIS TYPE OF EVENTUALITY BEYOND THE PALE OF AFGHAN CONTINGENCY PLANNING.

6. SELDOM ALLUDED TO, BUT POSSIBLY UPPERMOST IN THE MINDS OF AFGHAN PLANNERS, IS A SUBVERSIVE DOMESTIC THREAT TO THE REGIME, EITHER WITH OR WITHOUT THE COVERT SUPPORT OF ONE OF AFGHANISTAN'S NEIGHBORS. NUMEROUS EPISODES THROUGHOUT AFGHAN HISTORY -- AS RECENTLY AS

1975 THERE WERE REPORTS THAT PAKISTANI SUPPORT HAD BEEN
SIGNIFICANT IF NOT INSTRUMENTAL IN DISTURBANCES IN THE
PANJSHIR VALLEY -- WOULD MAKE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN
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KABUL EXTREMELY WARY OF THE POSSIBLE MACHINATIONS OF
OUTSIDE POWERS WHO MIGHT WANT TO EFFECT A CHANGE IN
AFGHAN POLICY. FURTHERMORE, EVEN TODAY GOA REPRESENTA-
TIVES CONCEDE (MOSTLY OBLIQUELY) THAT THE REGIME'S
AUTHORITY DOES NOT EXTEND THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, AND
THAT GOA CONTROL IS NOTICEABLY WEAK OR ABSENT IN THE
MORE REMOTE TRIBAL AREAS NEAR THE BORDERS.

7. IN THE EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT, THE THREAT OF AN OVERT
ACTION AIMED AT AFGHANISTAN BY ONE OF ITS NEIGHBORS IS
REMOTE. FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT, ON THE OTHER HAND, A
MORE SERIOUS AND PLAUSIBLE THREAT WOULD EMANATE FROM
POSSIBLE DOMESTIC UNREST RESULTING FROM RISING, BUT
UNFULFILLED, ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL EXPECTATIONS, AGAIN
EITHER WITH OR WITHOUT OUTSIDE ENCOURAGEMENT OR SUPPORT.
IT COULD BE THAT THE AFGHAN FOCUS ON PAKISTAN MERELY
REPRESENTS THE LONG-HELD VIEWS OF PRESIDENT DAOUD, WHO,
FOR HIS PART, WOULD BE LOATHE TO ADMIT THAT HIS REGIME
DOES NOT EXERCISE COMPLETE HEGEMONY THROUGHOUT THE
COUNTRY.

8. POTENTIAL THREAT ASSUMING CHANGED ATTITUDES OF
NEIGHBORING GOVERNMENTS. ALTHOUGH WE WOULD EMPHASIZE
THAT WE CONSIDER NONE OF THE THREATS DISCUSSED ABOVE
TO BE PARTICULARLY IMMEDIATE, A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE OF
ATTITUDES BY ONE OF AFGHANISTAN'S THREE PRINCIPAL NEIGH-
BORS COULD PRESENT SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR THE GOA. ALL
THREE POSSESS SIGNIFICANTLY STRONGER MILITARY FORCES,
AND, TO VARYING DEGREES, EACH HAS A SUBVERSIVE CAPA-
BILITY WHICH, SHOULD A POLITICAL DECISION BE TAKEN TO
MOUNT SUCH AN EFFORT, COULD POSE SIGNIFICANT DIFFICULTIES
FOR THE REGIME IN KABUL. FOR THE MOMENT, WE CAN FORESEE
NONE OF THE THREE IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS UNDERTAKING ANY
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SUBVERSIVE PROGRAM AIMED AT AFGHANISTAN, BUT, NEVERTHE-
LESS, THE POTENTIAL EXISTS, AND THE GRANT MILITARY
TRAINING WE ARE NOW PROVIDING ENABLES THE GOA TO IN-
CREASE ITS OWN CAPABILITY FOR MAINTAINING INTERNAL
SECURITY AND STABILITY.

9. PRESENT AFGHAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. ALTHOUGH WE GENERALLY FEEL THAT THE SIZE OF THE AFGHAN MILITARY FORCES IS INFLATED TO SOME DEGREE -- AN ACTIVE DUTY ESTABLISHMENT OF ABOUT 100,000 MEN -- THE MILITARY DOES NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT AN INORDINATE DRAIN ON THE AFGHAN SOCIETY OR ECONOMY AS A WHOLE. (IN THIS REGARD, MANY AFGHAN OFFICIALS JUSTIFY THIS NUMBER IN TERMS OF A SOCIOLOGICAL AND TECHNICAL TRAINING PROGRAM WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO THE COUNTRY'S OVERALL ECONOMIC GROWTH.) THE DEPLOYMENT AND MAKE-UP OF THE AFGHAN FORCES, ALTHOUGH STRUCTURED AND POSITIONED TO THWART AN INVASION ACROSS THE PAKISTAN BORDER, ARE PRIMARILY AIMED AT INSURING INTERNAL STABILITY. U.S. INTEREST IN AFGHANISTAN -- AFGHAN INDEPENDENCE AND REGIONAL STABILITY -- ARE ESSENTIALLY SERVED BY SUPPORTING THIS TYPE OF MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. ALL MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN AFGHANISTAN IS OF SOVIET ORIGIN, AND IS REASONABLY BASIC TO A THIRD-WORLD ARMY. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT THE AFGHANS DESIRE OR SEEK ANY UNUSUALLY SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT WHICH WOULD AFFECT THE REGIONAL BALANCE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 4 KABL 4421

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

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10. PRESENT U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.
THE ONLY ELEMENT OF ASSISTANCE NOW BEING PROVIDED AFGHANISTAN IS GRANT MILITARY TRAINING, AND, IN OUR VIEW, THIS SHOULD REMAIN THE CASE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. WE ARE PROVIDING ONLY PRO-

FESSIONAL TRAINING (AT VARIOUS LEVELS) TO OFFICERS, AND AS STATED IN PARAGRAPH 3 ABOVE, THIS PROGRAM NOT ONLY SERVES U.S. INTERESTS BY INCREASING AFGHANISTAN'S ABILITY TO GUARANTEE ITS OWN INDEPENDENCE AND INTERNAL SECURITY, BUT IS HAS THE ADDED ADVANTAGE THAT IT EXPOSES WHAT WE FEEL ARE FUTURE GOA DECISION-MAKERS TO AMERICAN SOCIETY, VALUES, AND LIFE-STYLE WHICH, IN MANY CASES, COULD RESULT IN A PRO-U.S. ORIENTATION ON THE PART OF THE INDIVIDUAL OFFICER FOR YEARS TO COME. IN THIS REGARD, WE CAN IDENTIFY NUMEROUS GRADUATES OF THE SMALL U.S. TRAINING PROGRAM WHO CURRENTLY HOLD KEY POSITIONS OR COMMANDS WITHIN THE AFGHAN MILITARY STRUCTURE. THE CONTINUED BUILDING OF A CADRE OF SUCH OFFICERS CANNOT BUT HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT ON U.S. FUTURE INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN.

11. IMPACT ON AFGHANISTAN'S ECONOMY OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE
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PROGRAM.
IN THAT OUR PRESENT PROGRAM IS
COMPOSED ENTIRELY OF GRANT MILITARY TRAINING IN
THE U.S., THERE IS NO RESULTING NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE AFGHAN
ECONOMY. IN THE LARGER SENSE AS WELL, AFGHANISTAN'S OVERALL
MILITARY PROGRAM HAS LITTLE IMPACT ON THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY OR
ON ITS DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS (SEE KABUL 3934).

12. ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE.
THE SOVIET UNION, THE PRIMARY MILITARY DONOR, IS CURRENTLY
PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL TRAINING TO APPROXIMATELY
250-300 AFGHAN MILITARY OFFICERS PER YEAR. MANY OF THESE PROGRAMS
INVOLVE PERIODS OF SEVERAL YEARS RESIDENCE IN THE USSR
AND INCLUDE EXTENSIVE DOSES OF POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION. INDIA,
EGYPT, FRANCE, THE U. K., AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA ALSO HAVE BEEN PROVIDING
SOME PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL TRAINING TO AFGHAN MILITARY
OFFICERS. SHOULD THE U.S. PROGRAM BE TERMINATED BY US, HOWEVER,
WE WOULD NOT NECESSARILY ASSUME THAT THE GOA WOULD
TURN TO OTHER COUNTRIES TO MAKE UP ANY SLACK IN TRAINING. RATHER,
IN OUR VIEW, THE AFGHANS WOULD PROBABLY CONCLUDE THAT SUCH A
TERMINATION WOULD REPRESENT LOST OPPORTUNITIES WHICH COULD
NOT BE RETRIEVED BY UNDERTAKING A SIMILAR RELATIONSHIP WITH
ANOTHER COUNTRY. THEY WOULD ALSO CONCLUDE THAT SUCH A
TERMINATION RESULTED FROM DECLINING U.S. INTEREST IN AFGHANISTAN.

13. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS.
EARLIER THIS YEAR A NEW CONSTITUTION WAS ADOPTED BY AFGHANISTAN
WHICH CONTAINS CERTAIN GUARANTEES OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS. MOREOVER,
THE CONSTITUTION PROVIDES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A
POLITICAL PARTY AND FOR ELECTIONS TO A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO BE
CONVENED ON NOVEMBER 22, 1979. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE TRADITIONAL
ASPECTS OF HIS SOCIETY, AND THE ESSENTIALLY CAUTIOUS APPROACH
OF THIS PARTICULAR REGIME, IMPLEMENTATION OF THE

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PROVISIONS OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION IS PROCEEDING, NOT SURPRISINGLY IN OUR VIEW, RELATIVELY SLOWLY. NEVERTHELESS, WE FEEL THAT THIS

REGIME SINCERELY DESIRES TO RAISE THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF THE PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN, AS WELL AS TO INCREASE--WITHIN CERTAIN SPECIFIED PARAMETERS -- THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF THE MAJORITY OF AFGHAN CITIZENS. THE CONTINUATION OF OUR INTERNATIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING (IMET) PROGRAM WILL HAVE SOME IMPACT ON THE REGIME'S ABILITY TO PRESERVE STABILITY WITHIN AFGHANISTAN, AND THIS INCREASED CONFIDENCE COULD CONCEIVABLY RESULT IN FURTHER STEPS BEING TAKEN TO INCREASE INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND ACTIVITY. CONVERSELY, THE TERMINATION OF OUR PROGRAM COULD CONCEIVABLY HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON SUCH DEVELOPMENTS,

ALTHOUGH GIVEN THE SIZE OF OUR IMET PROGRAMME WOULD NOT WISH TO EXAGGERATE THE OVERALL IMPACT ON DOMESTIC GOA POLICY EITHER WAY.

14. RECOMMENDED "MIX" OF GRANT TRAINING.
WE ARE CURRENTLY PROVIDING ONLY PROFESSIONAL TRAINING TO SELECTED AFGHAN MILITARY OFFICERS, AND WE BELIEVE THAT A CONTINUATION OF THIS TYPE OF PROGRAM WOULD BEST SERVE U.S.

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FROM THE AMBASSADOR

CINCPAC FOR 5453/J-4

INTERESTS. IN THAT NO U.S. EQUIPMENT IS UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR SALE TO AFGHANISTAN, THE POSSIBLE PURCHASE OF EQUIPMENT-RELATED TRAINING IS A MOOT POINT. IN OUR ASSESSMENT, IT WOULD BE UNLIKELY THAT THE GOA WOULD UNDERTAKE TO PAY TRAVEL AND LIVING COSTS OF ITS TRAINEES IN ORDER TO MAXIMIZE TRAINING AVAILABILITY UNDER IMET.

15. CONCLUSIONS.

IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE ANALYSIS, IT IS OUR ASSESSMENT THAT THE U.S. IMET PROGRAM HAS SERVED, AND CAN CONTINUE TO SERVE, OVERALL U.S. INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN. THIS PROGRAM REPRESENTS A UNIQUE POLICY TOOL WHEREBY THE UNITED STATES CAN ASSIST THE GOA IN ITS QUEST FOR INCREASED DOMESTIC STABILITY, AND CAN OFFER THE GOA AN ALTERNATIVE TO ALMOST TOTAL RELIANCE ON SOVIET MILITARY TRAINING. IN BOTH CASES THE TWO PARAMOUNT U.S. INTERESTS ARE SERVED IN THAT REGIONAL STABILITY IS FOSTERED AND AFGHAN INDEPENDENCE IS ENCOURAGED. IT IS OUR CONCLUSION THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD CONTINUE TO RECEIVE AN EXTREMELY ATTRACTIVE RETURN ON ITS INVESTMENT IN THE IMET PROGRAM
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IN AFGHANISTAN. FOR THESE REASONS, I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THE CONTINUATION AND, IF POSSIBLE, BALANCED AUGMENTATION OF THIS PROGRAM IN FY1979.

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